

[For information pertaining to Syrian recipes and food preparation
see 70: Rowland, M1 Middle East, category 116, pp. 200-231.]

istry of Agriculture, and all meats offered for sale must carry an official stamp of approval. Few controls exist over the production of milk, however, except in some of the larger cities. Cow's or goat's milk is normally sold in bulk and peddled in donkey carts. Herds of goats are frequently driven through the streets, the animals being milked while the customer waits. The dairies and the herds which supply milk to the cities of Damascus and Aleppo are subject to inspection by the municipal veterinarians. Samples collected from restaurants and other food establishments may also be submitted to the food control laboratories of the Ministry of Health for bacteriologic examination. There are no modern facilities for pasteurization. A few dealers in Damascus retail bottled milk which has been pasteurized by submersion in boiling water baths. Little milk is consumed raw, since boiling is the general practice, but butter and cheese are frequent sources of infection. [252] Brucellosis is enzootic among both goats and cattle, tuberculosis among the cattle. 744 744 234

HEALTH SERVICES AND MEDICAL FACILITIES

HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

The present health organization of the Syrian government has evolved since 1943, when the republic was established. The health and the medical services are administered by the Ministry of Health (and Public Assistance), with headquarters in Damascus. Executive authority resides in the Minister, who is advised on matters of policy by a Supreme Public Health Council. He is assisted by a Director General of Health, who, in turn, is advised by a Public Health Consultation Council made up of experts in representative technical fields. The functions of the Ministry are discharged through 7 constituent departments—public health affairs, public health laboratories, hospitals and clinics, inspections, pharmaceutical affairs, supplies and administration and records. 744

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highly infected villages were situated on the Gerahi and the Soublakh wadies. Similar surveys in 9 villages in the Tell Abiad area showed an average infection rate of 77 per cent, with the greatest prevalence in the villages on the Tell Abiad and the Slouq branches of the Belikh. Infection is apparently acquired early in life through swimming, washing or other contact with streams inhabited by infected snails. The intermediate host, *Bulinus truncatus*, has been collected from several localities.

Two mobile treatment teams were operated by the Ministry of Health in the infected areas in 1951. Plans for the inauguration of a snail eradication program were also under consideration.

OTHER HELMINTH INFECTIONS. Infection with one or more varieties of intestinal worms is prevalent in all parts of the country. The insanitary habits of the people and the frequent use of night soil as fertilizer promote the spread of the different species. Ascariasis is widely distributed. Infection rates ranging from 30 to 86 per cent have been demonstrated in Aleppo, Damascus, Homs and Hama, as well as in the surrounding villages. The infection is most prominent among the children, in both urban and rural areas. Trichuriasis is also widespread, but enterobiasis and strongyloidiasis tend to be sporadic.

Taeniasis is common. The beef tapeworm, *Taenia saginata*, is enzootic among the cattle, and the popularity of raw, or underdone, meat in certain national dishes is responsible for considerable human infection. The pork tapeworm, *T. solium*, is sometimes encountered among the Christian communities. Occasional infections with the dwarf tapeworm, *Hymenolepis nana*, are observed in most districts.

Hydatid disease is not unusual. *Echinococcus granulosus* is enzootic among dogs, sheep, goats, cattle and camels. In studies reported in 1936,²⁰ cysts were detected in 25 to 30 per cent of the sheep and the goats examined in slaughterhouses in Aleppo, Damascus and Homs. Infection was uni-

versal among the 15 camels slaughtered in the same period, but the consumption of camel's meat is normally restricted to small groups of the population. 232 164

Rare cases of trichinosis are reported among the Christian peoples. Canine infections with the fluke, *Heterophyes heterophyes*, are numerous, and one instance of infection in man has been recorded. 164

Brucellosis. Brucellosis is enzootic among the goats and the cattle. Sporadic cases of undulant fever, caused by *Brucella melitensis*, occur in man. However, infection with *Br. abortus* has not been reported. According to local custom, milk is seldom used without boiling, but infection may result from the consumption of contaminated cheese or butter, as well as from contact with infected animals. 232 164 262 252 164

DISEASES SPREAD CHIEFLY THROUGH THE RESPIRATORY TRACT

Tuberculosis. The reporting of tuberculosis is not compulsory in Syria, and the prevalence of the disease is not accurately known. On the basis of mortality statistics for 1947 and 1949, about 1.8 to 2.0 per cent of the total recorded deaths were due to tuberculosis. The usual discrepancies in reporting are exaggerated, however, by the tendency to conceal the presence of tuberculosis because of the social stigma attached to the disease. From 80 to 90 per cent of the known deaths were attributed to pulmonary infection, but nonpulmonary forms of tuberculosis are common in most areas. Competent local authorities estimated that there were at least 32,000 cases of tuberculosis in the country in 1951, representing a morbidity rate of about 10 per 1,000 population. 164 165 164 183 164

In the survey carried on in Damascus in 1950, tuberculin tests were performed on 10,695 individuals between 6 and 24 years of age. The positive reaction rate rose progressively with age: 12 per cent of 563 children, 6 years of age, gave a positive reaction to tuberculin, and 46 to 51 per cent of 1,079 persons from 16 to 19 years of age. 659 751